

# ONE

## WHAT SHOULD TEACHING ASSISTANTS DO?

### WAYS FORWARD IN DEVELOPING TEACHING ASSISTANTS' ROLES

This chapter will attempt to state specifically what teaching assistants should do, and how schools can maximise their impact in the classroom and throughout the school. It also suggests how this can be understood by everyone through job descriptions, as well as examining how teaching assistants' successes and needs can be identified through performance management.

#### EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS

In order to think more clearly about what teaching assistants *should* do, it is probably first helpful to think about what they *currently* do and what they are perceived as being good at. The OFSTED report *Teaching Assistants in Primary Schools: An Evaluation of the Quality and Impact of their Work* (OFSTED 2002), raised a number of interesting issues:

- The work of teaching assistants improves the quality of teaching.
- Teaching assistants spend a considerable amount of time supporting teachers in numeracy and literacy. (This is beginning to change the pattern of work for teaching assistants.)
- Training opportunities have helped assistants develop learning support skills.
- Teaching assistants spend less time carrying out more traditional roles, such as photocopying. [This may become a separate and different issue because of the national agreement for tackling teacher workload.]
- Teachers value the input of teaching assistants.
- Managing the work of teaching assistants is recognised as complex and can be difficult – especially when evaluating their impact on children's learning.
- Teaching assistants make valuable contributions to the work of the whole school and have an important pastoral function.

Obviously, OFSTED does not have a monopoly when describing what teaching assistants are good at, and what issues there are surrounding the different roles and expectations that they face. However, OFSTED has summarised successfully the key issues for teaching assistants in their role, which is to: